



Dana E. Blackwell
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COMMISSIONERS:
CAROL O. BIONDI, VICE CHAIR
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HELEN A. KLEINBERG
DAISY MA, VICE CHAIR
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DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
SANDRA RUDNICK, VICE CHAIR
ADELINA SORKIN
REVEREND G. LIND TAYLOR
DR. HARRIETTE WILLIAMS, CHAIR

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **December 1, 2003**, in room 140 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Carol O. Biondi
Patricia Curry
Joyce Fahey
Phalen G. Hurewitz
Helen Kleinberg
Daisy Ma
Christina S. Mattingly
Dr. La-Doris McClaney
Sandra Rudnick
Adelina Sorkin
Rev. G. Lind Taylor
Dr. Harriette Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused)

Brenda Galloway
Lily Griego

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the December 1, 2003 meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the November 3, 2003 general meeting were unanimously approved.
The minutes for the November 17, 2003 general meeting were held for approval.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Dr. Sanders stated that the Department is on schedule to begin the redeployment of staff and indicated that the first phase will take place on January 31. This includes approximately 200 staff. The Department is currently examining the areas in which a "backfill" by CSAs is necessary. Training will be developed and provided to the redeployed staff.
- Dr. Sanders indicated that in response to the August 29, 2003 Board of Supervisors (BOS) motion, he provided the BOS a report on improving education for dependent youth in non-public schools. The report, which took place on November 25, 2003, included the Department's contract with group homes. Following Dr. Sanders report, Supervisor Antonovich introduced a motion that would require the Department to develop performance-based contracts with group homes. The motion was unanimously carried.

Commissioner Kleinberg indicated that the Commission did forward suggestions to Walter Chan, DCFS, regarding education that should be included in the group home contract. She furthered questioned whether the Sybil Brand Commission was the appropriate agency to provide oversight of the non-public schools affiliated with group homes.

- Dr. Sanders indicated that the role of the panel created as part of the resolution to the Katie A. settlement is not as well defined as he previously believed. The Department will be having conversations with the panel to further explore the timeline for program implementation and other identified objectives of the settlement. Vice Chair Biondi expressed her concern that Los Angeles County is not represented on the panel. This she believes is problematic due to the unique qualities and conditions of the county.

Commissioner Sorkin questioned the allocation of funds that was previously designated to MacLaren Children's Center (MCC). John Oppenheim stated that the Department does have a detailed budget as how to reinvest those funds (\$17.8 million); however, those funds are not included in the settlement agreement. He further commented that the funds are still available, stating that \$8.3 million has been authorized in the FY 2003-04 budget to operate the resource centers. The balance is held in a reserve account until the need for the funds are documented to ensure that the funds are earmarked for services relating to the closure of MCC. Commissioner Kleinberg requested a report to understand the expenditure of the funds and year-end projections. Dr. Sanders indicated that the strategies to expend the funds should be tied the MCC population and the Department is re-examining exactly how the money should be spent to ensure that the money is tied to this population.

Vice Chair Biondi requested the report that documents the post placement activities of the youth who were discharged from MCC.

Commissioner Kleinberg asked if there is any language in the group home contract that addresses the potential conflict of interest on the part of the mental health providers that contract with the group homes. Angela Carter, DCFS, stated that this issue will be addressed by Dr. Sophy.

Vice Chair Biondi shared that she recently toured Casa Pacifica, located in Ventura County. While the average stay of a youth is approximately 22 months, Vice Chair Biondi suggested that the Department examine contracting with the facility, as it has a comprehensive array of services.

Commissioner Curry advocated for the group home contract to require that group homes qualify for the CWLA certification by the end of the contract cycle.

- Dr. Sanders suggested that the Commission receive a report on the development of the consolidated home study, which is currently underway in the Department.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Chair Williams thanked and acknowledged Vice Chair Biondi for her attendance at the Judicial Conference and Commissioner Curry for her participation on the: Katie A. settlement.
- Chair Williams acknowledged the many letters of support from community stakeholders on the IVE Waiver.
- Chair Williams commented on the continued support of Judge Nash promoting adoption.
- Chair Williams activities since the last Commission meeting includes attendance at the Joint Emancipation/Adoption Committee meeting, Relative Care Committee meeting and a meeting with the Children's Planning Council regarding the ScoreCard recommendations.
- Commissioner Kleinberg acknowledged the leadership provided by Miriam Krinsky, Children's Law Center, on educational issues for dependent youth. She reported that significant work has taken place to examine the feasibility of an Education Coordinating Council (ECC) as ordered in the August 29, 2003 BOS motion. Ms. Krinsky provided a report to the BOS detailing these efforts. Commissioner Kleinberg explained that the ECC is planned to be a joint cooperative between the city, county and judicial organizations to discuss the challenges faced by dependent, and probation youth within the education system. Ultimately a blueprint will be crafted to address the identified challenges. The ECC will also look to developing necessary legislation to ensure systemic changes. Commissioner Kleinberg indicated that funding for the ECC's establishment and the appropriate staffing has not yet been resolved.

With respect to the development of an education unit at the Department and at the Department of Probation, Commissioner Kleinberg report that Probation has agreed to develop a task force to look at education and that the Department has agreed to the creation of an education unit.

Ms. Krinsky added that AB490 will become law in January 2004 and an implementation plan will need to be developed. The CLC is currently developing training materials for educational agencies. She emphasized that school stability is still a critical and challenging issue for dependent youth. The Department is currently examining how they may be able to increase school stability when replacement is necessary.

Ms. Krinsky indicated that a number of stakeholders throughout the county and city have passed motions to show support for the ECC. The establishment of the ECC will be coming before the BOS in January 2004. Ms. Krinsky suggested that the Commission forward a letter to the BOS expressing support for the ECCs creation.

Commissioner Kleinberg stated that the LAUSD negotiations are still underway. The contract has been expanded to include a data collection section. This information would ultimately come to the ECC to identify educational challenges.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Yvonne Michelle Autry commented that because the Department does not provide a voice for parents, the Department's efforts to reunify families is a pretense.
2. Shirley Dixon Farrior testified that misinformation on education is being provided.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Chair Williams adjourned the meeting and directed Commissioners to reconvene in workgroups.